

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

25 August 1972

MEMORANDUM*

SUBJECT: A Rough Future for Morocco's King Hassan

In time, Moroccans are likely to become restive at the continuing deterioration of their situation in comparison to that of their neighbors. The loyalty of the armed forces to the monarchy also is likely slowly to decline. But Hassan's hold on power looks to be good for some years. With a deft combination of force and favor, he probably can suppress or buy off potential dissidents for at least several years to come. Over the longer run, Hassan's ability to retain his throne is open to serious question. Even today, a carefully hatched plot along Libyan lines cannot be ruled out. (NIE 60-70, 12 March 1970)

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Hassan is solidly in charge of Morocco and is likely to remain so for a considerable period. But the Moroccan regime faces a number of very serious problems which collectively could prove its undoing in the more distant future. Hassan has little disposition for slogging away at uncongenial tasks of resource allocation, spending, and planning. The royal family's financial dealings are a growing topic of domestic criticism. The malaise among the politically aware is showing up in student strikes. The King has great resources of power, skill, political legitimacy, and religious prestige to rely on. But he cannot expect to run Morocco as his medieval forebears did for the indefinite future without a blowup. (ONE Staff Memorandum, 28 April 1971)

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* *This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and discussed with other components of the CIA, who are in general agreement with its judgments.*

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King Hassan survived a spectacular and nearly successful coup attempt in July 1971. While Hassan quickly reestablished control and executed the alleged ringleaders after summary trial, the uprising at Skhirat palace clearly shook the regime and exposed the vulnerability of narrowly-based royal rule. Although an explosion does not appear likely in the immediate future, continuing discontent poses a long-term threat to the regime. To avoid eventual forceful overthrow, Hassan must be willing to change the system far more fundamentally than he has so far been willing to do. General Oufkir has emerged as unquestionably the most important personage in the country after King Hassan. There are numerous reports that he is having second thoughts about the long-term survival of the royal house. (ONE Memorandum, 28 February 1972)

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King Hassan II, who was nearly overthrown in a military uprising in July 1971, has learned little from his narrow escape. This virtually assures that other challenges to the King will take place, but Hassan is in a strong position and could carry on for many years. The military establishment is both the chief prop of and potential threat to the crown. Thus far, General Oufkir, who has firm control of the armed forces, has shown no inclination to move against the King. He would be tempted to step in, however, if Hassan seemed to be fumbling badly in handling the problems of government. The odds in favor of a move by lower ranking officers, who seem more concerned with the need for basic change in society are likely to grow over time. (NIE 61-72, 15 June 1972)

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1. On 16 August 1972, General Oufkir was directly implicated in an attempt to shoot down King Hassan's airplane. Oufkir himself is dead and the King has assumed direct control of the armed forces.

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The King has survived not because of any "strong position" but because of some atrociously bad gunnery by the Moroccan Air Force and apparently some quick thinking on his own part. The highly negative comments in the papers cited above -- on the King's handling of civilian political forces, the strains in Moroccan society, the country's economic problems and prospects, and the loyalty of the armed forces -- are as true as ever and the latest attempt on the King's life casts new doubt on the durability of the monarchy.

2. It is noteworthy that both the July 1971 attempt to overthrow the King and the more recent effort were carried out by small groups of military officers -- primarily Berbers, a group he has favored. Available evidence indicates that the would-be regicides aimed at eliminating Hassan and getting rid of the corrupt and wasteful entourage that surrounds him. The eventual demise of the monarchy itself apparently was intended. Relatively few officers were directly involved in each attempt. Among others who may have had advance knowledge of the attempt, none appears to have been sufficiently loyal to the monarch to report the plans to the authorities.

3. Thus, the loyalty of the Moroccan military establishment is now even more questionable than before. There are no doubt many officers who remain loyal to the King, but he cannot be sure

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who they are. He has reacted to the disloyalty of a few by giving a scathing talk to several dozen senior officers in which he impugned their integrity. Furthermore, the denunciation was broadcast to the entire population. He has taken over the running of the military establishment on grounds that he cannot trust any of his military subordinates; in these circumstances, the military has little reason to trust him. Since he has long since eschewed any confidence in civilian political forces, he now has no loyal cadre of people on whom he can depend.

4. There is also the question of what affect this second coup attempt will have on Hassan himself. He has shown an admirable capacity to escape from a hail of bullets, take charge of the situation, and restore order. He has also, over the years, demonstrated great ability at political manipulation -- balancing this political party, that clique, or this person off against one another. But he has devoted a large part of his time to the pursuit of pleasure. If he now refuses to trust any subordinate with the day-to-day business of running the government, the efficiency of the Moroccan bureaucracy, none too high to begin with, is likely to decline. Such effort and energy as he is willing to devote to the task of governing is likely to be absorbed by intrigue, political manipulation, overseeing competing security services, and the like.

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5. He will have little time to spare for Morocco's social and economic problems, which have had only small attention from him in the past. And there remain formidable sources of political difficulty. Unemployment and poverty are endemic and growing in Morocco; the major cities with their large numbers of impoverished slum dwellers and frustrated students and intellectuals are fertile breeding grounds for dissent.

6. Civilian opposition leaders may believe that the King has been seriously weakened by recent events and that mass dissent would now be a more effective weapon against royal rule than it was in the 1960s. A variety of urban-focussed ills -- student and labor strikes, demonstrations, public disorders -- could well add to the regime's difficulties in the months ahead. And the loyalty of the forces needed to control such manifestations is questionable.

7. The two recent attempts on his life have significant elements in common. They were carried out by individuals with special perquisites and privileges, coming from groups who have been especially favored by the King. And the King's survival does not appear to have inspired any outpourings of popular support for his person or for the monarchy. If he cannot buy loyalty nor count upon his role as religious

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as well as temporal leader for popular support, his only hope seems to lie in reforming his own approach. The coup attempt of 1971 didn't teach him anything. The attempt of 1972 may, but we doubt it strongly. His initial response has been to blame virtually everyone else in Morocco for creating conditions that permitted blows at the throne. The outlook for his regime, therefore, can only be described as deteriorating.

8. Some monarchs -- Husayn and the Shah come to mind -- have faced similarly parlous situations and survived. But they had assets, such as a body of loyal subordinates, a disposition to work at the business of governing and a willingness to make the throne an agent of change. As far as we can judge, Hassan no longer has the support of important groups in the country. Moreover, he is a dilettante, and is convinced of his own righteousness.

9. The question of when -- not if -- the next attempt on Hassan's life will be made is unanswerable. A group may seize the first available opportunity, even in the next few weeks, to try to eliminate him. Or, plans could be laid to mature over a period of months or even years. There is no assurance that any particular

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plot would be successful; too much depends on luck and individual marksmanship. In short, further blows at the King are certain; there is no way of knowing when or where they will come. And, since Hassan has isolated himself from most significant sources of support in the country, the odds are increased that one or another attempt against him will succeed.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Ray S. Cline

Copies of the attached Memorandum have been sent to Assistant Secretary David Newsom and Country Director, North Africa, James Blake.


JOHN HUIZENGA
Director
National Estimates

25 August 1972
(DATE)

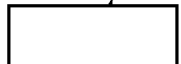
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MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI

This is an early reading on the prospects for King Hassan in the wake of the assassination attempt against him. The excerpts from earlier issuances which lead off the piece show that nobody should be surprised by these events, and in fact we now estimate that the odds on his survival are poor.


JOHN HUIZENGA
Director
National Estimates

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